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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4994

INFO RUEHZO/AFRICAN UNION COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE

RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE

RHMFIUU/CJTF HOA IMMEDIATE

RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE

RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE

RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE

RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 ANTANANARIVO 000615

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

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ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU - AMB COURVILLE

DEPT FOR AF/E, AF/FO, INR/AA, AND DRL

DEPT FOR DS/IP/AF/E - CKOLLMAR

DEPT FOR DS/DSS/ITA - DROTHSTEIN

PARIS FOR D'ELIA

PRETORIA FOR POLCOUNS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [EAID](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [ASEC](#) [AU](#) [CN](#)

SUBJECT: AFRICAN UNION CHALLENGES BACAR IN THE COMOROS

REF: ANTANANARIVO 608

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: An African Union (AU) ultimatum and ministerial delegation to the Union of the Comoros is applying pressure on renegade Anjouan island "President" Mohamed Bacar. All three islands of the Union are calm, awaiting Bacar's response to the AU. Rumors abound from Anjouan that Bacar and loyalists may be preparing to flee. Union election officials indicate no election can be held on Anjouan June 24, but once the island is pacified, a fair election would be organized as soon as possible. The run-off elections on the islands of Grande Comore and Moheli will be held June 24 as scheduled. END SUMMARY.

AU ISSUES FINAL ULTIMATUM

¶2. (SBU) Post received a copy of the statement out of the June 19 African Union Cape Town meeting from the AU's headquarters in Brussels via email (full text in paragraph six) threatening deposed Anjouan island president Mohamed Bacar with the use of force if he does not comply with international demands and accept Union authority. In particular, the June 10 Anjouan election is deemed void and a fair election for June 24 demanded. Over 200 AU security forces remain on the island of Grande Comore awaiting orders to deploy to Anjouan.

BACAR PREPARING TO FLEE?

¶3. (SBU) The AU reportedly communicated its demands to Bacar via fax to Anjouan on June 20 and is still awaiting his reply. AU Envoy Madeira is reportedly returning to the Comoros June 21 but the precise mandate of his mission is unknown. In the meantime, rumors from contacts in Anjouan suggest Bacar loyalists are gathering valuable possessions and preparing to flee. Few officials are accepting offers in island "cabinet" positions, perhaps sensing the end is near. One story circulating suggests Bacar is making ready to flee to Mayotte, and perhaps onward to France to join his French citizen wife. While he has persistently ignored international demands so far, Bacar is perhaps beginning to recognize the African Union and broader international community may not turn away until the Comoran crisis is resolved.

¶4. (SBU) An Independent National Electoral Commission official told

us whatever the imminent outcome, island elections will not be held on Anjouan June 24, as time will be needed to deploy and prepare once (if) Bacar steps aside.

CALM IN THE OTHER TWO ISLANDS

¶15. (U) In Grande Comore and Moheli, the other two islands in the Union of the Comoros, preparations remain underway for the run-off stage of elections for the island presidents. Conditions are reportedly calm, although a few voices have questioned the credibility of these elections in light of the Union crisis. The Embassy has one officer and two local staff in Grande Comore as observers of the run-off.

¶16. (U) BEGIN TEXT OF AU STATEMENT

MEETING OF THE MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE OF THE COUNTRIES
OF THE REGION ON THE COMOROS,
19 JUNE 2007, CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

COMMUNIQUE

1) The Ministerial Committee of the countries of the region on the Comoros met today, 19 June 2007, in Cape Town, South Africa, to discuss the situation in the archipelago. The meeting was chaired by the Foreign Minister of the Republic of South Africa, in her capacity as the representative of the country coordinating the regional efforts on the Comoros, and attended by Ministers and other heads of delegation from Tanzania, Kenya, Mozambique, Seychelles, Mauritius and Madagascar.

2) The meeting was briefed on the latest developments of the situation in the Comoros by the AU Commissioner for Peace and

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Security and the Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the AU Commission for the Comoros. The meeting was also briefed by a Comorian delegation led by the Vice-President of the Union of the Comoros, which requested the AU to provide urgent assistance to the Comorian Government, to enable it overcome the current crisis in the archipelago, and to enhance the long-term capacity of the institutions of the Union.

3) The meeting expressed its deep concern at the prevailing situation in Anjouan, which has the potential of seriously undermining the significant progress achieved so far in the reconciliation process in the Comoros. The meeting strongly condemned the decision of the Anjouanese authorities to organize the 1st round of the election of the President of the Island on 10 June 2007, in spite of the decree of the President of the Union postponing the election, as the conditions on the ground were not conducive to the holding of free, fair and transparent elections, and the decision adopted by the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) on 9 June 2007.

4) The meeting reiterated the position of the PSC rejecting the outcome of the "election" in Anjouan and called on the international community to do the same. The meeting also took note of the ruling of the Constitutional Court of 18 June 2007 declaring that the electoral activities for the presidential election in the Autonomous Island of Anjouan are a non event and instructing the relevant authorities to invite the voters to participate in the election of the President of the autonomous Island of Anjouan. Consequently, the meeting considered that the purported installation of Colonel Mohamed Bacar as "President" of Anjouan and all subsequent acts by the Anjouanese authorities are null and void.

5) In view of the above, and based on the ruling of the Constitutional Court, the meeting agreed that effective measures should be taken to bring the crisis in the Comoros to a definite end, in line with the arrangements agreed upon by the Comorian parties, as stipulated in the Fomboni Framework Agreement of February 2001 and the Beit Salam Agreement on the Transitional Arrangements in the Comoros of December 2003, as well as the Constitution of the Union.

6) The meeting demanded that the Anjouanese authorities take, immediately and unconditionally, the following measures:

(i) to comply with the ruling of the Constitutional Court and to unambiguously acknowledge that the "election" organized in Anjouan on 10 June 2007 is null and void;

(ii) to facilitate the organization, in Anjouan, of the first round of the election of the President of the Island at a date to be agreed upon by all stakeholders, in accordance with the Constitution and relevant electoral legislation, and to create conditions for the holding of free, fair and transparent elections;

(iii) to allow the African Union Electoral and Security Assistance Mission to the Comoros (MAES) to deploy in Anjouan, to provide security for the holding of free, fair and transparent elections in Anjouan. The Anjouanese gendarmerie will be cantoned and will, therefore, not be involved in the monitoring of the electoral process;

(iv) to extend the necessary cooperation to MAES to enable it prepare plans for the disarmament of the Anjouanese gendarmerie and integration of its elements into the Comorian army, as well as assist in the establishment of an internal security force in conformity with the Constitution of the Union and under the supervision of the AU; and

(v) to commit themselves to, and create the necessary conditions for, the restoration of the authority of the Union in Anjouan.

7) The meeting agreed that, in the event the above demands are not met by the Anjouanese authorities, the PSC should meet to take all necessary measures, including revising the mandate of MAES and increasing its strength, to achieve the above objectives and to ensure the full implementation of the institutional framework provided for by the Constitution of the Union of the Comoros. In this respect, the meeting recalled that, in its communique of 9 June

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2007, the PSC reiterated its determination to take all necessary steps to assist in the effective establishment of the new institutional framework of the Comoros, including the restoration of the authority of the Government of the Union in Anjouan.

8) The meeting stressed that issues of governance, including the inadequacies of the current constitutional arrangements, and capacity building are among the most serious challenges facing the Comoros and that there is need to address them effectively.

9) The meeting reiterated the commitment of the countries of the region to support the people of the Comoros in their endeavor to promote reconciliation and work towards sustainable development.

10) The meeting decided to dispatch a ministerial delegation to the Comoros to engage the Comorian authorities on all the issues referred to above.

11) The meeting commended South Africa for its efforts and tremendous contribution to the search for a lasting solution to the crisis in the Comoros, as well as to the other countries of the region for their commitment. It also expressed appreciation to all the countries that contributed police and military personnel to MAES, including South Africa, Tanzania, Sudan and Senegal, as well as to Mauritius and Seychelles for their contribution within the framework of the Indian Ocean Commission. The meeting commended MAES for its work and contribution to the smooth conduct of the 1st round of the elections.

12) The meeting called on all AU partners, including the League of Arab States, the European Union, the United Nations and the bilateral partners, to fully support the AU efforts and the outcome of the present meeting.

END TEXT OF AU STATEMENT

¶7. (SBU) COMMENT: Bacar has been wily and persistent so far and may still have a few rabbits up his sleeve. That said, if Bacar and his cronies flee, Post expects any militia remaining behind to give up without a fight. It will be necessary for Union military commanders to quickly establish control of Anjouan and disarm soldiers and/or reintegrate them into the Union National Army of Development (AND). President Sambi will quickly seek to assert Union authority over Anjouan, while simultaneously establishing a legitimate island government via elections. Following a brief stabilization period, President Sambi must have immediate financial assistance from the donor community to establish inter-island governance structures and to deliver results on basic development needs like health, education, and jobs. Sambi has less than four years remaining in the only term he is allowed under the Constitution. END COMMENT.

SIBLEY